

Statement by Congressman Michael H. Michaud before the
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Committee on Veterans Affairs
May 3rd 2007

H.R. 1824

Chairwoman Herseth Sandlin and Ranking Member Boozman, members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the initiative your subcommittee has shown in considering my bipartisan legislation, H.R. 1824, and allowing me the opportunity to appear to discuss this important bill.

We owe a great debt to those who put their lives in harm's way protecting our country. When they come home, I believe it is critical that we provide them with an opportunity to live the American dream that they have risked so much to protect. That means providing health care and benefits compensation. It also means ensuring economic opportunity.

My legislation would allow accelerated payments of educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill to an eligible veteran enrolled in an approved program of education or training that leads to employment as an operator of a commercial motor vehicle. Current law only provides such "accelerated" payment for approved training programs that will lead to employment in a high-technology sector. I do not believe we should limit the range of opportunities available to our veterans and my bill takes a step in expanding these opportunities. My provision would expand accelerated payment of MGIB benefits to eligible veterans seeking employment in the high demand field of commercial trucking. Many CDL training courses are short-term and require upfront payment of tuition, and thus, do not conform to the current MGIB payment system of \$1075 per month over 36 months.

In addition, my bill includes an important provision that would exclude benefits under the MGIB from being considered as income for purposes of determining eligibility for education grants or student loans under any other provision of Federal law. Current eligibility rules for receiving certain student federal financial aid programs include MGIB payments in the calculation of resources. In other words, what this provision I am saying is that we should not penalize our veterans for taking advantage of this earned benefit.

Madame Chairwoman, easing the transition of our military personnel back to civilian life is a responsibility our government must fully embrace. I believe my bill takes a step in that direction.

I would like to thank you and Ranking Member Boozman for your leadership on these issues and for allowing me to appear before your committee.